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Chm

1 April 1986

NOTE FOR:

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FROM: Hal Ford

SUBJECT: Instability in Soviet Third World Allies

Randy, the following quick, very brief thoughts on your new endeavor/publication. A very good first cut: sophisticated, responsibly done, etc. I would nonetheless urge that still more factors be ground into the equations, in the interest of more fully portraying the total dynamics of these case studies.

1. By the nature of the exercise, the focus is given overly to instabilities. To avoid overestimating (US-desired) instability, added emphasis needs to be given to forces tending to stability and/or to continuing ties with the USSR: e.g., nowhere else to go; desire to play off East and West; anger at Israel or other associates of the US; past experience with Western but not Eastern imperialism; source of arms easier, cheaper, and quicker from the East than from the West; existing relations with Moscow seem to insure (?pre-PDRY, at least) continuance in power of present elites; tribal, etc., instabilities are "always with us, hopeless but not serious," etc. -- the danger of overestimating the significance of such chronic instabilities.

2. Another item I would particularly urge be included is some measure of Soviet (or Soviet allied) success in penetrating certain centers of political/military power in each case study example. Can the host regime materially loosen its ties with the USSR even if it wishes to? Asked another way, have the Sovs gone -- or not gone -- about penetration in more effective ways over the last decade or so, so that the relative ease with which Egypt, Somalia, Ghana, etc., earlier stepped away no longer applies to that degree?

3. Still another (and central) variable -- and I'll leave it to you and yours to decide how best to factor this item in -- what are the East-West dynamics at any given time with the given Soviet associate? What is US doing or not doing? To what degree and in what measure is the US engaged in aggravating existing instabilities? What realistic expectations of US behavior can local regimes entertain?

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4. I can appreciate the interests which have given rise to this particular publication/endeavor. I suppose it's worth pursuing further, improving the approach, and maintaining the professional independence of judgment, etc. In addition, however, to the above-mentioned danger of unintentional bias toward instability, I wonder if the mere act of putting down on paper the various indicators and box scores may not also create too great an impression of stasis in certain instances: that is, that x country is unstable (and therefore theoretically hopeful from the US point of view); while y country is stable (hence no hope) -- while in reality there is more fluidity present at any time in certain of the situations, with sudden change more possible (of various kinds and caused by various vagaries), than the imprinted word might connote.

5. Since writing the above I have seen Graham Fuller's critique of a quantification which doesn't quite communicate "feel." I share his view. I also appreciate that your endeavor is one which seeks through quantification to introduce a more rigorous analytic method into a bottom line judgment. OK, but by the nature of the beast still in large part a matter of feel.

6. In any event, good luck.


Hal Ford

cc: Graham Fuller
H. Ford Chrono

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